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CIA-RDP85T00875R00170001

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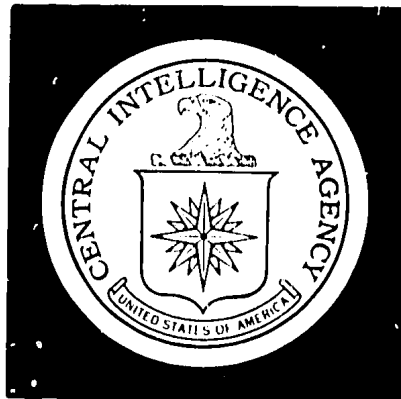
CLASSIFIED 111 93/71

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DIRECTORATE OF
INTELLIGENCE

Intelligence Memorandum

*Military Recruitment And Conscription Increases
In North Vietnam*



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ER IM 71-93

May 1971

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CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY
Directorate of Intelligence
May 1971

INTELLIGENCE MEMORANDUM

MILITARY RECRUITMENT AND CONSCRIPTION INCREASES
IN NORTH VIETNAM

Introduction

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1.

an accelerated recruitment and conscription drive has been under way in North Vietnam since Sihanouk's ouster in Cambodia in March 1970. This memorandum reviews the evidence for this conclusion and speculates on the destination of the current class of call-ups - whether for bolstering the home guard or for feeding into the infiltration system for military duty elsewhere in Indochina or for both purposes.

Discussion

Evidence of Induction in 1970-71

2. For a year there have been numerous signs in the North Vietnamese press of accelerated recruitment of men for military service. Commencing late in March 1970, soon after the ouster of Prince Sihanouk, the press ran several articles designed to encourage youths to enlist and high-lighting military induction activities. This campaign was linked in the press to the theme that the events in Cambodia meant that North Vietnam would be required to "respond quickly to the expanding requirement in the present fight against the Americans." Explicit reference in the press to conscription campaigns continued to appear in April and May. Such publicity died down during June and July, but another wave of recruitment was apparently under way in August. The Hanoi press on 15 August publicized a high-level conference on regional military affairs and suggested

Note: This memorandum was prepared by the Office of Economic Research.

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[redacted]

that a fairly heavy call-up was under way. An editorial of 19 August said that "groups after groups of youth are joining the army and leaving to defend the Fatherland." There were few press references to recruitment during September and October, but during the remainder of 1970, particularly the last six weeks of the year, the volume of press references to recruitment grew. After an "appeal" of the Party and the government on 10 December for increased preparedness following US air actions over North Vietnam in late November, newspapers and radio broadcasts claimed that large numbers of youths had "volunteered" for military service.

3. References to conscription have continued to appear during 1971. The volume of articles tapered off temporarily in mid-January but then rose again in late March following South Vietnamese operations in Laos and continued at a substantial level through at least the first half of April. One recent article on conscription -- an item in the party daily *Nhan Dan* for 16 April -- makes reference to "coming troop recruiting phases," presumably including one or more during the remainder of 1971.

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Table 3

Estimated Number of Men Inducted into the
North Vietnamese Army a/

<u>Thousand</u>	
<u>Year</u>	<u>Number Inducted</u>
1965	155
1966	260
1967	185
1968	215
1969	80
1970 <u>b/</u>	200

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[REDACTED]

Induction Related to Infiltration

7. During the past several years, most inductees into the North Vietnamese army earmarked for infiltration to other parts of Indochina have departed from North Vietnam within three to six months of their entry into service. Thus, induction has been closely geared to the requirements of the battlefield. As examples, the rate of induction increased threefold in the third quarter of 1967 from an estimated 16,000 to 64,000 as Hanoi was preparing for the general offensive in 1968. Conscription was up again in the first two quarters of 1968 to about 60,000 per quarter, when the regime moved to offset heavy casualties suffered after the offensive was under way.

8. The pattern of infiltration in the last half of 1970 was consistent with the evidence of a sharply increased rate of conscription beginning in the second quarter of 1970. [REDACTED]

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10. The evidence of substantial recruiting in both the last half of 1970 and the early part of 1971 would point to infiltration on a greatly increased scale in the first quarter of 1971. [REDACTED]

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11. A discrepancy of this magnitude is not easy to explain. The causes may include any or all of the following:

- First, the Lam Son 719 operation probably encouraged Hanoi to hold most of the recent trainees temporarily in North Vietnam because of the vulnerability of infiltration groups that transit southern Laos to Allied operations. Normally, infiltration groups comprise "personnel filler" who require several weeks of pre-battle preparation at their destinations before they can be effectively integrated into VC/NVA combat

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Table 4
Estimated Distribution of Men Inducted into the
North Vietnamese Army Available for Infiltration a/

	<u>Thousand Men</u>	
	<u>Estimated Inductions</u>	<u>Available for Infiltration</u>
1969	80	
1970 Total	200	
1st Quarter	8	5
2nd Quarter	99	22
3rd Quarter	49	33
4th Quarter	44	43
1971 1st Quarter	65	88
1970 2nd Quarter- 1971 1st Quarter	257	186

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[redacted]

units. It seems doubtful that Hanoi, at least during the developing phases of Lam Son 719, continued to put manpower into the pipeline at previously recorded rates.

- At the same time, Hanoi also probably used some trainees to "beef up" organic units that deployed into southern Laos as a counter to Lam Son 719. 1/ An estimated total of some 15,000 troops in five NVA regiments moved into southern Laos from North Vietnam since 1 February.

- Third, delays in detecting the movement of infiltration groups within North Vietnam may mean that some troops probably have entered the pipeline but have so far gone undetected.

- Hanoi may have diverted an increased number of recent trainees to security duties in North Vietnam.

- Finally, our estimate of the number of North Vietnamese recruited into the army during 1970 may be somewhat high.

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[redacted]

12. Nonetheless, there is little doubt that inductions rose considerably in 1970 [redacted]

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[redacted] As a result, the North Vietnamese probably have been able to support the buildup of forces and the replacement of losses in southern Laos without seriously denuding their strategic reserve in North Vietnam. Equally important, Hanoi appears to have an existing potential for sustaining a high rate of infiltration well into the summer months.

Conclusions

13. There is considerable evidence that the North Vietnamese armed forces sharply increased military inductions in 1970 beginning in April, shortly after Sihanouk's ouster. [redacted]

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[redacted] the total inducted in 1970 may have been on the order of 200,000, or some two and one-half times the 1969 level. The Hanoi press and radio also strongly indicate an acceleration of induction in this period.

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[redacted]

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[REDACTED]

As was to be expected, the increase in call-ups during the spring and early summer was translated into sharply increased infiltration of North Vietnamese troops to other areas of Indochina during the last half of 1970.

[REDACTED]

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14. The observed rate of infiltration dropped during the first quarter of 1971, however, despite the fact that the high level of conscription during the second half of 1970 should have provided for a greatly increased flow of troops out of North Vietnam. While the estimate of conscription may be too high, a discrepancy of this magnitude probably requires other explanations. Some infiltration groups probably have transited the pipeline and are so far undetected, and some troops may have moved as regimental units [REDACTED] In addition, Hanoi may be in the process of substantially augmenting its armed forces at home. In turn, this could reflect plans for a permanent buildup of troop strength for home defense or a temporary buildup of strategic reserves in anticipation of heavy infiltration requirements later this season.

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